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Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Human resources management

Human resources management reform, accountability and responsibility, personnel practices and policies and management irregularities

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the reports of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/55/253) and on accountability and responsibility (A/55/270), as well as the follow-up report on management irregularities causing financial losses to the Organization (A/54/793). During its consideration of the reports, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification.

2. The Advisory Committee also had before it the note by the Secretary-General on personnel practices and policies (A/C.5/54/21), which was submitted pursuant to the request made by the Committee in paragraph 104 of its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001.[1] The Committee takes note of the contents of that report.

Human resources management reform

3. The Advisory Committee notes with satisfaction the improvement in the format of the report on human resources management reform (A/55/253), which is, in general, much clearer and better focused than previous reports on the subject have been. The manner in which the Secretary-General proposes to proceed is outlined in paragraphs 80 to 82 of his report. The observations and recommendations of the Committee are set out below; however, the issue of administration of justice will be dealt with separately in the context of the Committee's consideration of the report of

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the Joint Inspection Unit on the administration of justice at the United Nations (A/55/57 and Add.1).

Human resources planning

4. As indicated in paragraphs 20 to 25 and annex I of the report, the Secretary-General has established the departmental/office action plan in human resources as the main instrument of planning. According to the report, the action plan reviews the following elements of human resources management: current vacancies, projected vacancies, geographical representation, gender balance, mobility of staff, performance appraisal, career development, training and staff-management relations. The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management meets with each department and office head to agree on specific goals for each element for the coming 12-month period and to review the achievements and/or shortfalls of the previous 12-month period. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that human resources action plans are formulated at the level of Under-Secretary-General or head of mission. The Committee notes the statement in paragraph 9 of annex I that achievement or non-achievement of the goals of the annual plan is monitored at the six-monthly or mid-point progress review. **Given the overall responsibilities of programme managers for reporting on finance, programme and personnel matters, the Committee recommends that the reporting/planning period be reviewed in the light of experience.**

5. The Advisory Committee notes the statement in paragraph 11 (d) that there is an unprecedented number of vacancies, that up to 400 staff will be retiring each year for the next five years and that the turnover rate presents an opportunity for rejuvenating the Organization. Information on vacancies is set out in annex I below. Additional information on the length of time for which posts have been vacant has been requested and should be supplied to the Fifth Committee. **The Committee stresses the importance, in formulating and implementing human resources action plans, of giving priority to ensuring a systematic rejuvenation of the Secretariat and of retaining younger staff, particularly in the light of the age profile of the staff in the Organization.**

6. As indicated in the report, a human resources management information system (HRMIS) is being set up to make possible the worldwide integration of human resources data. In this connection, the Advisory Committee requested additional information on the linkage between HRMIS and IMIS (see annex II). **The Committee urges the Secretary-General to give priority to the full development of HRMIS at Headquarters and in the field, as many of the proposed reforms are dependent on the dissemination of information throughout the system.** In addition, the Office of Human Resources Management is in the second phase of compiling a skills inventory. This phase, which is scheduled for completion in 2000, will include staff in the field missions. As indicated in annex I, paragraph 6, to the report of the Secretary-General, the inventory is intended to provide a basis for assessing the existing skills of staff, which in turn can be matched to departmental requirements, help to evaluate gaps in personnel resources and help to assess candidates for vacancies, transfers, training and specialized assignments. The Committee notes that in phase one, staff answered a questionnaire on a voluntary basis. In paragraphs 43 and 60 of its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001, the Advisory Committee indicates a total of approximately 15,500 regular and extrabudgetary posts. In paragraph 7 of his report,

the Secretary-General indicates that 5,200 staff responded to the questionnaire. While the number of posts and the number of staff are not directly comparable, the foregoing statistics nevertheless indicate a fairly low rate of response to this request for voluntary participation. **The Committee questions whether the completeness of the information collected can be assured if phase two is to be carried out in the same manner, and recommends that the Secretariat consider measures to maximize the response by staff.**

Streamlined rules and procedures

7. As indicated in paragraph 27 of the report, the goal in this area is to eliminate documentation relating to obsolete and redundant rules and procedures, to streamline remaining documentation, to allow for easier access through electronic means and to provide the means for consistent and uniform application. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the first phase of the process, involving the consolidation and deletion of obsolete rules, would be completed by mid-2001. By 31 December 2000, the existing rules would be available online through a new electronic human resources handbook. The date of completion of the second phase, which would involve simplification of the substantive aspects of the rules, was not known, as it would require work at the common system level. The Committee has been calling attention to this issue since at least 1985;[2] the situation only seems to have become worse. The Committee expects that concrete steps will be taken to produce identifiable results.

Recruitment, placement and promotion

8. The Advisory Committee notes, as indicated in annex II, paragraph 6, to the report, that the proposed changes in the system of recruitment, placement and promotion are predicated on the principle that programme managers, who are responsible and accountable for delivering substantive results in their work programmes, must also be responsible for taking the final decision on the selection of the staff who will fulfil those work programmes. The elements of the proposed new system are indicated in paragraph 35 of the report.

9. The Advisory Committee sought clarification of the statement in annex II, paragraph 8, that staff involvement in the actual selection of candidates would cease. In this connection the Committee requested detailed, step-by-step information on the proposed system as compared with the current system (see annex III).

10. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that in order to speed up the process, recruitment would begin nine months before a vacancy was to arise. This would apply to foreseeable vacancies, such as those which occur as the result of retirement or because of the time limit set on occupancy of the post under the proposed managed mobility system (see below). The Committee was informed that departments were already being required to address vacancies resulting from retirement nine months ahead of time. The Committee notes that advance planning gives additional time to programme managers to screen and judge the suitability of all qualified candidates.

11. Other proposals for speeding up the process include the development of generic formats for vacancy announcements for similar jobs within occupational networks and the rostering of qualified shortlisted candidates who are not chosen for the job so that they may be considered for other similar jobs.

Mobility

12. In section II.D and annex III of his report, the Secretary-General set out a system to promote the mobility of staff in the United Nations. According to the Secretary-General, the aim is to establish a managed approach to mobility, with mobility being understood in a broad sense to include movement within and among functions, departments, occupations, duty stations and organizations of the United Nations. The mechanisms to achieve this goal are set out in paragraph 41 of the report.

13. **The Advisory Committee welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General to promote the mobility of staff in the P-3 to D-2 levels (see annex III, para. 27, of the report). In implementing these provisions to improve mobility, due consideration should also be given to the importance of institutional memory and expertise, which, however, should not be used to impede the mobility of staff.**

14. Upon request, the Advisory Committee was provided with additional information concerning the reabsorption of staff following mission assignment. That information is reproduced in annex IV to the present report. The Committee notes that for absences of up to two years, staff will be guaranteed the ability to return to a job in their occupational network and duty station, and that for absences exceeding two years, staff will be able to apply for lateral moves through the compendium process, as outlined in annex III, paragraphs 27 to 29, to the report of the Secretary-General. **The Committee is of the opinion that staff members requested by the Organization to remain on mission assignment longer than two years should have the same guarantees as for absences of up to two years, and recommends that the Secretary-General take the issue under consideration.**

Contractual arrangements

15. In paragraph 47 and annex IV of his report, the Secretary-General proposes that in future only three types of appointments would be granted: (a) short-term contracts of up to six months for seasonal work and short-term requirements and when-actually-employed contracts for episodic work, representing no change from the present arrangements; (b) fixed-term contracts, with extensions of up to a maximum total of five years; and (c) continuing contracts, which would be open-ended, with service continuing as long as it meets the Organization's requirements for experience, skills and competency and performance is satisfactory. Separation benefits would be payable at the end of the continuing contract if separation is initiated by the Organization. Staff currently holding permanent appointments would maintain their current contractual status, but no new permanent appointments would be given; thus, for example, it is proposed that staff recruited through the national competitive examination and language staff would no longer receive permanent appointments. The Committee notes from paragraph 50 of the report that at this point the Secretary-General would welcome the views of the General Assembly, in particular with regard to the issue of permanent contracts.

16. The differences between the current permanent contract and the proposed continuing contract have not been adequately explained. Accordingly, the Advisory Committee requested additional specific information thereon (see annex V), as well as an analysis of the impact of the proposals on the existing legislative framework

for the appointment of staff (see annex VI) and information on the percentage of fixed-term contracts over the past five years (see annex VII).

17. The Advisory Committee is concerned about the practice of offering 11-month contracts, which are frequently renewed after a break of one month. The issuance of such contracts to meet continuing needs raises serious issues of budgetary transparency, since general temporary assistance funds are not intended for this purpose. Moreover, requiring an individual to break his or her service for 1 month out of every 12 in order to pretend that they are short-term staff is not in accordance with sound personnel management. **Accordingly, the Committee recommends that the issuance of 11-month contracts to meet continuing needs be discontinued and that strict controls be put in place to prevent future misuse of general temporary assistance funds.** In a related matter, the Committee has stated its views on general temporary assistance for specific positions in paragraph 52 of its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001.

Conditions of service

18. The Advisory Committee notes that, as indicated in annex IX, paragraph 1, a worldwide survey of work/life issues that influence staff members' work and decisions about mobility is being undertaken. The report mentions a number of issues under study, such as facilitation of spousal employment, provision of adequate childcare and staff health, safety and welfare in the workplace. With regard to facilitation of the employment of spouses of staff members, the Committee was informed that a number of agreements with host countries would be reviewed and negotiations would be continued with host countries where there was no agreement in place.

19. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that a competitive package of conditions of service is an essential element in the successful achievement of the goals set out in the report of the Secretary-General. This should be fully taken into account when the proposals of the International Civil Service Commission are considered by the General Assembly.**

Role of the Office of Human Resources Management

20. The Advisory Committee notes the changes proposed in the role of the Office of Human Resources Management. **In the opinion of the Committee, the proposal to remove operational and transactional processes from the Office and to give them to programme managers is timely; the Committee urges the Secretary-General to move forward as expeditiously as possible.**

Proposed amendment to staff rule 104.14

21. The Advisory Committee requested information concerning the extent to which the proposed amended staff rule 104.14 contained in annex X to the report of the Secretary-General is intended to implement the proposals in the report, as well as clarification regarding the use of the phrase "permanent appointment" in paragraph (i) (i) of the proposed amended staff rule. The information provided to the Committee is contained in annex VIII below.

Accountability and responsibility

22. The Advisory Committee takes note of the contents of the report of the Secretary-General on accountability and responsibility (A/55/270). **The Committee is of the view that, at the end of annex I to the report, a fifth element should be included regarding access to an impartial, fair system of internal administration of justice.** The Committee requested the Secretariat to provide it with a text for the fifth item, which should be provided to the Fifth Committee.

Management irregularities

23. The Advisory Committee takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on management irregularities (A/54/793), which was prepared in response to previous concerns raised by the Committee (A/53/954). **The Committee points out that an efficiently functioning system for the administration of justice, as well as the successful implementation of a comprehensive system of accountability (see A/55/270), will be key to the eventual positive impact of the procedures outlined by the Secretary-General in his report.**

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 7* (A/54/7).

[2] See ibid., *Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 7* (A/40/7), para. 72.

Annex I

Management report on personnel, posts and vacancies by section of the budget, as at 30 June 2000[a] (regular budget posts only)

Budget section	No. of posts			No. of staff			No. of vacancies			No. of posts blocked[b]	Vacancy rate			
	Total	Professional	General Service	Total	Professional	General Service	Total	Professional	General Service		Total	Adjusted[c]	Professional	General Service
1. Overall policy-making, direction and coordination	130	56	74	124	53	71	6	3	3		4.6%	4.6%	5.4%	4.1%
2. General Assembly affairs and conference services	1 856	902	954	1 823	875	948	33	27	6	1	1.8%	1.7%	3.0%	0.6%
3. Political affairs	189	104	85	184	99	85	5	5		1	2.6%	2.1%	4.8%	0.0%
4. Disarmament	47	29	18	46	29	17	1		1	1	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%
5. Peacekeeping operations	187	40	147	180	36	144	7	4	3	2	3.7%	2.7%	10.0%	2.0%
6. Peaceful uses of outer space	18	13	5	15	10	5	3	3			16.7%	16.7%	23.1%	0.0%
8. Legal affairs	139	76	63	136	73	63	3	3			2.2%	2.2%	3.9%	0.0%
9. Economic and social affairs	494	266	228	484	260	224	10	6	4	1	2.0%	1.8%	2.3%	1.8%
10. Africa: New Agenda for Development	22	13	9	19	11	8	3	2	1		13.6%	13.6%	15.4%	11.1%
11A. Trade and development	401	231	170	362	199	163	39	32	7	1	9.7%	9.5%	13.9%	4.1%
12. Environment	38	21	17	37	21	16	1		1		2.6%	2.6%	0.0%	5.9%
13. Human settlements	66	42	24	64	40	24	2	2			3.0%	3.0%	4.8%	0.0%
14. Crime prevention and criminal justice	24	19	5	24	19	5					0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
15. International drug control	71	47	24	68	44	24	3	3		1	4.2%	2.8%	6.4%	0.0%
16. Economic and social development in Africa	569	221	348	457	151	306	112	70	42		19.7%	19.7%	31.7%	12.1%
17. Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific	468	172	296	428	151	277	40	21	19		8.5%	8.5%	12.2%	6.4%
18. Economic development in Europe	196	115	81	185	108	77	11	7	4		5.6%	5.6%	6.1%	4.9%

Budget section	No. of posts			No. of staff			No. of vacancies			No. of posts blocked[b]	Vacancy rate			
	Total	Pro-fessional	General Service	**Total**	Pro-fessional	General Service	**Total**	Pro-fessional	General Service		**Total**	Adjusted[c]	Pro-fessional	General Service
19. Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean	**491**	181	310	**481**	179	302	**10**	2	8	1	**2.0%**	1.8%	1.1%	2.6%
20. Economic and social development in Western Asia	**266**	103	163	**237**	84	153	**29**	19	10		**10.9%**	10.9%	18.4%	6.1%
22. Human rights	**147**	95	52	**133**	83	50	**14**	12	2	1	**9.5%**	8.8%	12.6%	3.8%
25. Humanitarian assistance	**49**	32	17	**44**	27	17	**5**	5			**10.2%**	10.2%	15.6%	0.0%
26. Public information	**486**	251	235	**479**	246	233	7	5	2	1	**1.4%**	1.2%	2.0%	0.9%
27. Administrative services	**1 555**	347	1 208	**1 510**	318	1 192	**45**	29	16	7	**2.9%**	2.4%	8.4%	1.3%
28. Internal oversight	**80**	53	27	**78**	51	27	**2**	2			**2.5%**	2.5%	3.8%	0.0%
Total	**7 989**	**3 429**	**4 560**	**7 598**	**3 167**	**4 431**	**391**	**262**	**129**	**18**	**4.9%**	**4.7%**	**7.6%**	**2.8%**

[a] The number of staff plus the number of vacancies sometimes exceeds the number of posts; this represents part-time staff occupying posts at less than 100 per cent incumbency.

[b] Regular budget posts currently vacant with a future incumbency; this number is included in the total number of vacant posts.

[c] Excludes blocked posts.

Annex II

Linkage between the Human Resources Management Information System Section and the Integrated Management Information System

The Human Resources Management Information System Section of the Operational Services Division of the Office of Human Resources Management provides information from both the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) and supplementary information systems, as well as from other non-IMIS sources, in areas that are not yet covered or are not intended to be covered by IMIS per se. Among other responsibilities, the Section is tasked with: (a) providing IMIS support (help desk, pre-implementation support, testing, development of desk procedures, training and general user support), and (b) maintenance of worldwide data on human resources, extracting the relevant statistics and producing the required reports. For these tasks the Section employs ad hoc software tools, which do not constitute a separate system.

For example, currently reports on consultants cannot be produced fully from IMIS because it does not yet convert all locations and duty stations. Similarly, reports on gratis personnel require incorporation of data not all of which is currently available in IMIS. Furthermore, while personnel data in IMIS are available from 1994 onwards, related financial data are not available for periods before 1996 at Headquarters and for more recent dates in respect of offices away from Headquarters. For this reason, data collected in the pre-IMIS system (IPPS) needs to be maintained as a repository of information on staff that have not yet been included in IMIS and as a precursor to the full implementation of IMIS Release 5. Once IMIS Release 5 is completed, in 2001, automated reports will be able to be produced that include all IMIS data.

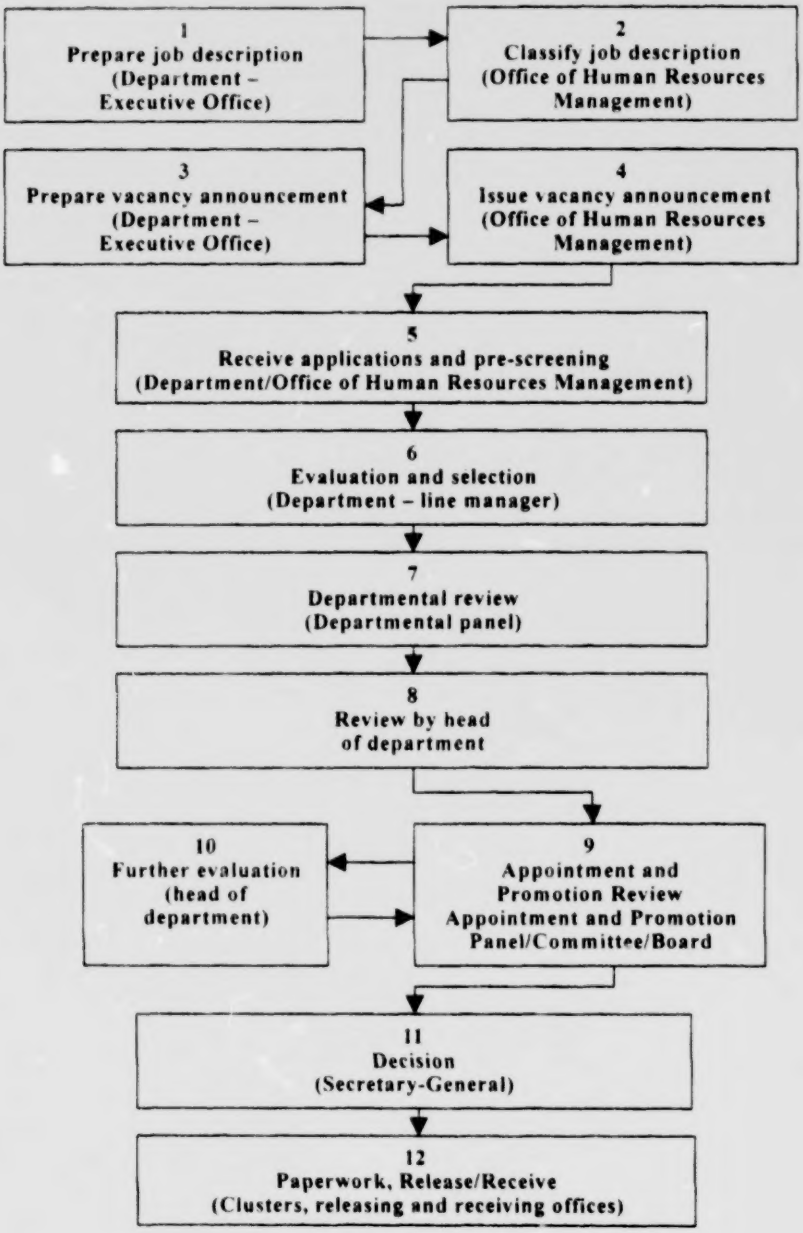
As IMIS expanded to cover more duty stations and various categories of personnel, the need for a system outside of IMIS will diminish.

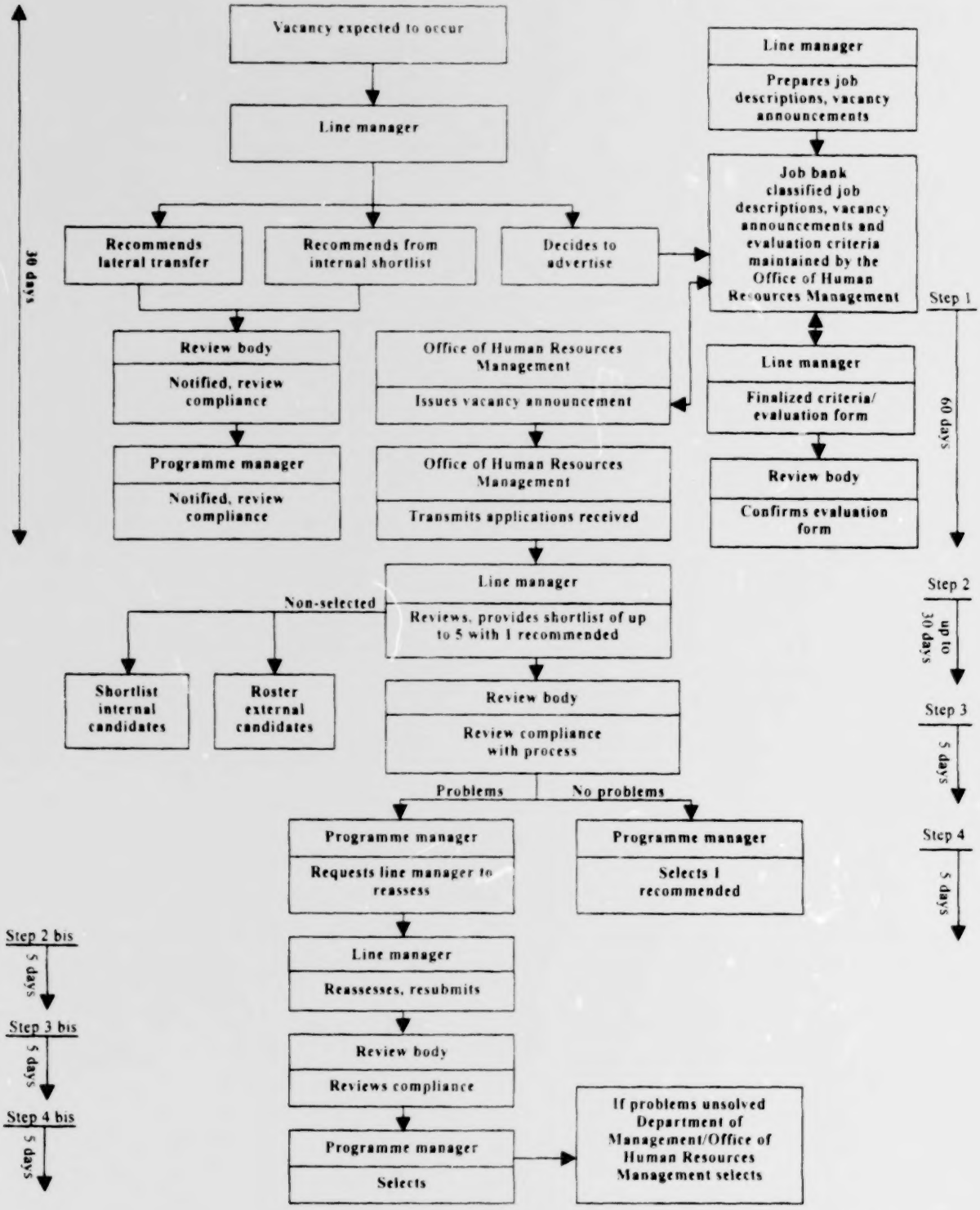
Annex III

Comparison of current and proposed recruitment and placement processes

Pre-recruitment

Recruitment process




Vacancy expected to occur
Line manager
Recommends lateral transfer
Recommends from internal shortlist
Decides to advertise
30 days
Review body
Notified, review compliance
Programme manager
Notified, review compliance
Line manager
Prepares job descriptions, vacancy announcements
Job bank classified job descriptions, vacancy announcements and evaluation criteria maintained by the Office of Human Resources Management
Step 1
Office of Human Resources Management
Issues vacancy announcement
Line manager
Finalized criteria/ evaluation form
Review body
Confirms evaluation form
60 days
Office of Human Resources Management
Transmits applications received
Line manager
Non-selected
Reviews, provides shortlist of up to 5 with 1 recommended
Step 2
up to 30 days
Shortlist internal candidates
Roster external candidates
Review body
Review compliance with process
Step 3
5 days
Problems
No problems
Programme manager
Requests line manager to reassess
Programme manager
Selects 1 recommended
Step 4
5 days
Step 2 bis
5 days
Line manager
Reassesses, resubmits
Step 3 bis
5 days
Review body
Reviews compliance
Step 4 bis
5 days
Programme manager
Selects
If problems unsolved Department of Management/Office of Human Resources Management selects

Annex IV

Reabsorption of staff upon return from mission assignment

Annex III to the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/55/253) sets out a number of mechanisms to encourage mission service and to ensure that field missions can be rapidly staffed without unduly disrupting the delivery of ongoing programme requirements.

With respect to return from mission assignment:

(a) Staff assigned to field missions for less than a year will be guaranteed return to their original jobs if they wish;

(b) For absences of up to two years, staff will be guaranteed the ability to return to a job in their occupational network and duty station;

(c) For absences longer than two years, staff will be able to apply for lateral moves through the compendium process, which will provide regular information on all forecast vacancies.

Staff who are temporarily promoted in the field will be eligible to apply for lateral moves at a higher level after one year's service at the higher level.

Any staff member who cannot be placed immediately on an established post within his or her occupational network will be accommodated through the central administration of vacancies.

Annex V

Additional information on contracts

A. Comparison of permanent contracts and proposed continuing contracts

	Permanent contracts	*Continuing contracts*
Preceded by	2 years' probationary service	2-5 years of fixed-term contract
Reasons for ending	On grounds of abolition of post, reduction of staff, health reasons or unsatisfactory service	May be terminated when the Secretary-General determines it is in the interests of the Organization
Termination/severance benefits	See column 2 of annex III "Termination indemnity" to the Staff Rules	See columns 3 and 4 of annex III "Termination indemnity" to the Staff Rules
Abolition of posts and reduction of staff	Permanent staff are retained in preference to those on all other types of appointment, with due regard to relative competence, integrity and length of service	Decision is made on the basis of relative competence, integrity and length of service

B. Suspension of the granting of permanent and probationary appointments

1. In section II, paragraph 5, of its resolution 49/222 A of 23 December 1994, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to sustain the present ratio between career and fixed-term appointments and to submit to it specific proposals on the proportion of appointments that should be made on a fixed-term basis.

2. Effective 15 September 1995, the Secretary-General decided to implement a freeze in recruitment (ST/SGB/278).

3. Effective 13 November 1995, the Secretary-General decided to suspend the granting of permanent and probationary appointments (ST/SGB/280).

4. In response to the deep concern expressed by Member States in respect of staff on probationary appointments, the Secretary-General, on 22 December 1995, issued a bulletin (ST/SGB/280/Amend.1) repealing the provision of ST/SGB/280 concerning the granting of probationary appointments on initial recruitment and the review of probationary appointments for conversion to permanent status.

5. Pursuant to the request made in General Assembly resolution 49/222 A, the Secretary-General submitted a report (A/C.5/51/34) on the ratio between career and fixed-term appointments. In that report the Secretary-General proposed three

different approaches which could be adopted individually or in combination, for the consideration of the Assembly, as follows:

(a) Given the widely disparate situations now included in the category of "fixed-term appointment" and the resulting limits on the usefulness of a proportion based on a broad and multi-purpose category, a desirable proportion of career appointments could be set, with no change to the existing types or conditions of appointment. In order to rationalize the system and make it responsive to budgetary constraints, the Assembly may wish to establish an overall limit on the number of career appointments, which would be directly related to the expected long-term resources of the Organization;

(b) With no change in the existing types of appointments, Assembly resolution 37/126 of 17 December 1982 could be clarified to specify that staff members will be entitled to consideration for conversion to career appointment not only when they have completed five years of continuing good service, as is now provided, but also when the work and functions to be performed are of a continuing nature and, if the Assembly should so decide, the number of career appointments does not exceed the overall limit that might be set under subparagraph (a) above;

(c) Building on the best attributes of subparagraphs (a) and (b) above, a dual-track system of career and non-career appointments could be introduced, with new types of appointment better suited than the existing ones to the present and future needs of the Organization.

6. In its resolution 51/226 of 3 April 1997, the General Assembly clarified as follows the views of the Member States:

(a) In section III.B, paragraph 19, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General, notwithstanding the provisions of section V of the resolution, to offer or to continue to offer probationary appointments to all staff members who have passed a competitive recruitment examination and to consider all such staff members for conversion to permanent appointment after completion of the period of probationary service;

(b) In section V of the resolution, the Assembly underlined the importance of the concept of career service for staff members performing continuing core functions; requested the Secretary-General to make efforts to achieve the level of 70 per cent of permanent appointments in posts subject to geographical distribution and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-third session; decided that five years of continuing service as stipulated in its resolution 37/126 did not confer the automatic right to a permanent appointment, and also decided that other considerations, such as outstanding performance, the operational realities of the organizations and the core functions of the post, should be duly taken into account; and endorsed in principle the introduction of a dual-track system of career and non-career appointments, and requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-third session detailed proposals for the implementation of that system, including a definition of continuing core functions with a full explanation of the manner in which such a definition would be applied and the text of any necessary amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules that would be required in order to implement the new system. At the time, the Assembly was aware that more than 70 per cent of staff in posts subject to geographical distribution were on a permanent appointment. The

resolution thus reinforced the suspension of conversion of fixed-term to permanent appointments that had already been decided by the Secretary-General.

7. In section V of its resolution 53/221 of 7 April 1999, the General Assembly reiterated and reinforced as follows the requests previously made in resolution 51/226:

(a) In paragraph 21, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to offer or to continue to offer probationary appointments to all staff members who had passed a competitive recruitment examination and to consider such staff members for conversion to permanent appointment after successful completion of the period of probationary service;

(b) In paragraph 23, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to implement section V, paragraph 2, of resolution 51/226, and encouraged him to continue his efforts with a view to increasing the share of fixed-term appointments throughout the Secretariat.

8. In accordance with resolution 53/221, the Secretary-General continues his efforts to maintain the level of 70 per cent of permanent appointments in posts subject to geographical distribution. This necessitates maintaining the freeze on the granting of permanent and probationary appointments, except in respect of recruitment of successful candidates from national competitive examinations and language staff.

Annex VI

Impact of the proposals made in the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform[a] on the existing legal framework for the appointment of staff

A. Legal framework from General Assembly resolution 51/226 of 3 April 1997

(a) In paragraph 1 of section II, the Assembly recognized the role of the Office of Human Resources Management as the primary representative of the Secretary-General in establishing human resources policies and guidelines. In his report, the Secretary-General focused on the importance of the Office as the central authority for human resources policies and guardian of the Assembly's mandates with respect to geographical distribution and gender. In the past, although the Office has been the authority for human resources policy, the actual application of that policy was often not implemented in that the various departments and offices were partially responsible for processes and goal-setting without any clear indication of what their specific role was in meeting those global mandates. With respect to application of human resources policies, programme managers often were not held accountable if they failed to apply established human resources policies.

The report of the Secretary-General clearly shows a complete change in strategy on the part of the Secretary-General. The Office of Human Resources Management has now finished the first round of annual human resources planning meetings with the heads of departments and offices. As explained in detail in annex I to the report, these meetings review critical human resources elements with each head of office and the head of office and the Office of Human Resources Management together agree on targets during the course of the year. At the end of the year, the Office of Human Resources Management reports to the Secretary-General on the performance of each office in meeting these targets. This is an unprecedented step towards full accountability of programme managers and provides the Office with specific and quantifiable data on the human resources performance of specific managers and departments. This leap from a more passive and subjective approach for monitoring to one which is objective and quantifiable strengthens the Office of Human Resources Management.

(b) In paragraph 11 of section III.B of the resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to instruct all programme managers to inform the Office of Human Resources Management of all vacancies immediately and of all foreseen vacancies six months before the posts became vacant.

This would be reinforced through the departmental action plans.

(c) In paragraphs 15 and 16 of section III.B, the Assembly reaffirmed the policy that recruitment at the P-1 and P-2 levels and for language posts be made exclusively through competitive examination, and normally through competitive examination for P-3 posts. Special attention to be paid to prospects for promotion to the P-3 level.

The report is fully consistent with the above.

(d) In paragraph 27 of section III.B, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that persons serving in peacekeeping or other field missions became eligible for consideration for internal vacancies after 12 months of service. However, in paragraph 2 of section IV of resolution 52/219, the General Assembly decided that persons eligible to be considered for internal vacancies within the Secretariat after 12 months of service under paragraph 27 of section III.B of resolution 51/226 should be staff appointed in the Professional category or above under the 100 or 300 series of the Staff Rules to serve against peacekeeping support account posts at Headquarters or in peacekeeping or other field missions, and decided further that such eligibility should be limited to vacant posts at the P-4 level and above.

Some elements of the recruitment/promotion and mobility proposals would extend the categories of those allowed to apply for internal vacancies to increase mobility between the field and Headquarters (see A/55/253, annex III).

(e) In section III.C, the General Assembly recalled prior resolutions reaffirming the goal of a 50/50 gender distribution and reaffirmed the paramount considerations of the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, with full respect for the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

These principles govern the work done in the departmental action plans.

(f) In section III.D the Assembly recognized that career development is an indispensable part of effective human resources management.

The proposals would facilitate career development of staff.

(g) In paragraph 6 of section III.D the Assembly requested development and implementation of the managed reassignment programme for entry-level staff.

Managed reassignment for staff at the P-2 level is an integral part of the reform proposals.

(h) In paragraph 7 of section III.D the Assembly reiterated the importance of making substantive progress towards greater mobility for internationally recruited staff.

The mobility proposal would achieve this goal.

(i) In paragraph 19 of section III.B the Assembly requested that the Secretary-General offer probationary appointment to all staff recruited through a competitive examination, and to convert the appointment to permanent after completion of the period of probationary service.

This will be affected if the General Assembly approves the principle of a change in contractual mechanisms. Staff recruited through a competitive examination would receive a fixed-term contract, for a maximum duration of five years, after which they would receive a continuing appointment.

B. General Assembly resolution 53/221

(a) In paragraph 2 of section II the Assembly decided that the Office of Human Resources Management should remain the central authority for the

monitoring and approval of the recruitment and placement of staff and for the interpretation of the regulations and rules of the Organization and their enforcement.

The reform proposals would in fact strengthen the Office's central monitoring role and its authority for interpreting the rules. In terms of placement of staff, the planned mobility system would increase the number of career move opportunities for staff at all levels in the Organization. The Office will have a central role in monitoring and working with programme managers in the selection process. In terms of the new recruitment system, decision-making for selection will rest with the programme managers, where it should in fact be. However, under the new system, should the Central Review Board provide evidence that procedures and evaluations were not completed in an open, fair, reasoned and documented manner, the Office of Human Resources Management and the Department of Management will have the authority to suspend the recruitment decision. This clearly strengthens the role of the Office in comparison with the current system, in which the Office is involved in the process only after managers have made recommendations and the review bodies have passed judgement. It is often difficult to argue either for or against a particular recommendation.

(b) In paragraphs 5 to 8 of section III the Assembly emphasized the need to ensure proper mobility of staff and requested proposals to that effect.

This is done in the mobility proposal.

(c) In paragraph 4 of section V the Assembly decided that external vacancy announcements should have a two-month deadline for submission of applications after the date of issue.

This requirement is respected in the proposal.

(d) In paragraph 21 of section V the Assembly requested that probationary appointments be offered to staff having passed a competitive recruitment examination and that such staff be considered for conversion to permanent appointment after successful completion of the period of probationary service.

In paragraph 23 the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to implement the 70 per cent ceiling for posts subject to geographical distribution, and encouraged him to continue his efforts with a view to increasing the share of fixed-term appointments throughout the Secretariat.

The above would be affected should the proposal on contractual mechanisms be adopted.

(e) In paragraph 5 of section X, the Assembly decided that the objective of 50/50 gender distribution should be pursued in compliance with the provisions of Articles 8 and 101 of the Charter of the United Nations and staff regulation 4.3 in order to ensure equal opportunities for qualified women *and men* in recruitment and promotion. [Emphasis added.]

The proposals are fully consistent with the decision of the Assembly.

(f) In paragraph 4 of section XI the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to take into account the views of staff representatives.

In paragraph 4 of his report the Secretary-General describes the extent of staff-management consultations that have been undertaken through the formal Staff-

Management Coordination Committee mechanisms with regard to the development of the Secretary-General's proposals. Furthermore, the Secretariat has undertaken an unprecedented communications outreach programme with the staff at large at Headquarters as well as with staff in each of the regional commissions and in Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi and various peacekeeping missions. An attempt was made to reach all categories of staff at all duty stations through this communications strategy to share proposals, solicit their views and incorporate some of those views into proposals. With respect to the mobility proposals, there was overwhelming support from the staff representatives of all of the offices of the Secretariat; the only reservation voiced was that of the New York Staff Committee. Most of the staff around the world voiced their interest in increased mobility and access to jobs and opportunities at the Headquarters duty station.

C. General Assembly resolution 37/126 of 17 December 1982

(a) In paragraph 5 of section IV, the Assembly decided that staff members on fixed-term appointments upon completion of five years of continuing good service should be given every reasonable consideration for a career appointment. In 1986 the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations recommended that staff members be eligible for permanent appointments after having served three years in the United Nations.[b] In its resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986 the Assembly decided that the recommendations made by the Group should be implemented by the Secretary-General.

(b) The scope and meaning of these provisions were changed as follows by the Assembly in paragraphs 2 and 3 of section V of its resolution 51/226 of 3 April 1997, in which it:

(i) Requested the Secretary-General to make efforts to achieve the level of 70 per cent of permanent appointments in post subject to geographical distribution. This resulted in a freeze of the conversion process until the percentage was brought down to that level;

(ii) Decided that five years of continuing service did not confer the automatic right to a permanent appointment, and that other considerations, such as outstanding performance, the operational realities of the organizations and the core functions of the post should be duly taken into consideration.

In addition, in paragraph 23 of section V of resolution 53/221 the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to implement section V, paragraph 2, of resolution 51/226, and encouraged him to continue his efforts with a view to increasing the share of fixed-term appointments throughout the Secretariat.

(c) The preliminary proposals on contractual mechanisms would be fully consistent with resolution 37/126, as they would allow for a continuing appointment, which would be a "career appointment" after an initial period on fixed-term, which would be up to but not more than five years. (See para. 8 of annex IV to the report of the Secretary-General.)

Rather than a fixed ratio of career and non-career appointments, the system would expedite achievement of the overall goals set out in paragraph 1 of annex IV to the report.

Notes

[a] A/55/253.

[b] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 49* (A/41/49), recommendation 45.

Annex VII

Percentage of fixed-term and permanent contracts

Staff subject to geographical distribution

Year	*Permanent and probationary*	*Percentage*	*Fixed-term*	*Percentage*	*Total*
1980	1 710	61.3	1 079	38.7	2 789
1985	1 908	61.5	1 194	38.5	3 102
1990	1 877	73.3	684	26.7	2 561
1995	1 918	76.3	597	23.7	2 515
2000	1 665	69.7	724	30.3	2 389

All staff

Year	*Permanent and probationary*	*Percentage*	*Fixed-term*	*Percentage*	*Total*
1996	7 486	49.3	7 692	50.7	15 178
2000	6 135	46.4	7 096	53.6	13 231[a]

[a] As at 2000, local staff in field missions have not been included into the total count.

Annex VIII

Additional information concerning annex X to the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform[a]

Annex X to the report contains a revised text of staff rule 104.14, which is brought to the attention of the General Assembly. This amendment is necessary to establish the central review bodies, which would constitute an integral part of the reformed recruitment, placement, promotion and mobility system. As such, introduction of revised staff rule 104.14 would play a vital role in the implementation of the human resources management reform package.

(a) The amendment is necessary for the establishment of the central review bodies to discharge the functions described in the proposals contained in the report;

(b) Paragraphs (a) to (g) of annex X, which deal with the establishment and composition of the proposed joint central review bodies, do not introduce substantive changes from the text of existing staff rule 104.14 (a) to (e), which governs the establishment and composition of the current appointment and promotion bodies. The new text, however, seeks to express the rules in a more readily understandable manner;

(c) Paragraph (h) of annex X defines the functions of the new central review bodies with regard to appointment and promotion:

(i) They shall confirm the validity of evaluation criteria to be applied to candidates for all advertised vacancies. This will ensure that the criteria are defined in advance, regardless of the individual qualifications of applicants;

(ii) After evaluation, they shall confirm that the recommendation has been based on the pre-approved selection criteria and is in compliance with applicable procedures. This will further ensure fairness and integrity of the process;

(d) The essential new feature of paragraph (h) is to introduce the requirement that the selection criteria are approved in advance of the process. Review by a joint body at this preliminary stage will avoid many delays that currently result from a review taking place at the end of the process, when it may be extremely difficult to resolve problems not previously identified;

(e) Paragraph (i) of annex X defines the review functions of the central review bodies in regard to permanent appointments. Those functions are currently discharged by the appointment and promotion bodies under staff rule 104.14 (f) (ii) *a* and *b*. These functions remain necessary as long as no decision has been taken not to give "probationary appointments" under staff rule 104.12 (a), which entitle a staff member to be considered for permanent appointment at the end of the probationary period. Moreover, as explained in paragraph 7 of annex IV to the report, a change to new contractual mechanisms would not affect the contractual status of staff currently holding permanent appointments. There will, therefore, be a need for a mechanism to review any proposal for termination of permanent appointments for unsatisfactory service under staff regulation 9.1 (a) in respect of staff currently holding a permanent appointment in the event that their performance is not satisfactory.

The General Assembly has been provided with the information on the proposals the Secretary-General is considering with respect to the contractual arrangements. However, no changes in them have been introduced yet. Therefore, the proposed amendment to staff rule 104.14 contained in annex X to the report provides for the continuation of the procedures with respect to permanent appointments. Should the Secretary-General propose in future to abolish permanent contracts, any necessary changes in the rules would be reported to the General Assembly.

Notes

[a] A/55/253.